

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 146130
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TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

UNCLAS STATE 146130

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, JA, US

SUBJECT: JAPANESE CAR SALES IN US DROP

REF: (A) STATE 101253; (B) 77 TOKYO A-324; (C) 78 TOKYO
A-67

1. DOMESTIC AUTO SALES UP, IMPORT SALES DOWN

SALES OF US AUTOS JUMPED 11 PERCENT IN MAY (COMPARED WITH MAY 1977) TO REACH A NEAR RECORD 962,985 UNITS, WHILE SALES OF JAPANESE DROPPED 11 PERCENT. IN APRIL, US AUTOS REGISTERED A 9 PERCENT CLIMB WHILE IMPORTS WERE DOWN BY 9 PERCENT. THESE TWO MONTHS HAVE REVERSED THE DECEMBER-MARCH TREND WHERE US MAKERS' SALES WERE BELOW 1977 LEVELS AND JAPANESE AUTO SALES WERE HIGHER. FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY-MAY, JAPANESE IMPORTS WERE UP ABOUT 2 PERCENT OVER 1977,
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PAGE 02 STATE 146130

WHICH WAS A STRONG SALES YEAR.

2. AUTO INDUSTRY ANALYSTS BELIEVE FALL IN IMPORT SALES REFLECTS IMPACT OF YEN APPRECIATION -- SINCE LAST FALL MOST OF THE JAPANESE FIRMS HAVE RAISED PRICES FOUR TIMES, INCLUDING AN APRIL INCREASE THAT AVERAGED \$250 A UNIT. RESULT IS THAT IN BOTTOM OF LINE \$3000 RANGE JAPANESE

STICKER PRICES ARE \$300 ABOVE COMPETING US-BUILT MODELS.

3. STATISTICS OF INTEREST FOLLOW: (NOTE THAT PERCENT
CHANGE FOR MAY 1978 COMPARED WITH MAY 1977 IS BASED ON
DAILY SALES RATE. THERE WERE 26 SELLING DAYS THIS MAY; 25
LAST MAY):

4. DOMESTIC SALES

MAY	1978	1977	CHG
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GM	547,327	479,949	9.7
FORD	269,382	217,114	19.3
CHRYSLER	127,672	118,475	3.6
AMERICAN	18,604	17,855	-0.2
US FIRMS	962,985	833,393	11.1

5. JAPANESE IMPORT SALES

MAY	1978	1977	CHG
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TOYOTA	46,223	55,312	-19.7
DATSON	35,989	46,633	-25.8
HONDA	26,154	25,097	0.2
SUBARU	8,495	7,096	15.1
MAZDA	6,118	4,761	23.6

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PAGE 03 STATE 146130

J FIRMS 122,979 138,899 -11.5

6.

JAN-MAY	1978	1977	CHG
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TOYOTA	196,532	207,515	-5.3
DATSON	157,411	167,559	-6.1
HONDA	120,861	105,935	14.1
SUBARU	39,839	29,835	33.5
MAZDA	22,609	16,557	36.55
J FIRMS	537,252	527,401	1.87

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